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JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

BRIEFS

MISSISSIPPI CHURCH HELPS FUND EFFORT

PHOENIX (BP) — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Pastors' Conference has listed Broadmoor Church, Madison, as one of the major donors that has allowed the conference to fund the first 30 recipients of $1,000 scholarships to attend the Pastors' Conference and SBC annual meeting this summer in Phoenix. With more scholarship announcements anticipated in early May, the first wave of awards already has exceeded the estimated five to 20 scholarships that Pastors' Conference leaders had hoped to fund. "We are thrilled that we have been able to help this group of men to attend, grateful to those who have given, and anticipate giving out even more in the near future," Conference President Dave Miller, pastor of Southern Hills Church in Sioux City, Iowa, told Baptist Press in written comments. "Our regret is that we will not be able to help everyone who wants to come to the annual meeting and Pastors' Conference."

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY NAMES FEMALE PREZ

WACO, Texas (BP and local reports) — Linda Livingstone has been selected as the first-ever female president of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, the largest Baptist-affiliated school in the country. Baylor Board of Regents chairman Ronald Murff said in an April 18 teleconference that Livingstone's unanimous selection was not provoked by the sexual assault scandal that unraveled the university's leadership in 2016, but was driven by a search for the best person for the job. Livingstone is a former Baylor faculty member and dean. Until her selection, Mississippi Baptists were able to boast of the only two female presidents of a Baptist-affiliated school, namely Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain: Bettye Rogers Coward (2001-2012), and Barbara Childers McMillin (2012-present).

CELEBRATING THE NEWS – Nurses and other staffers at Baptist Medical Center in Jackson cheer when the news is announced over a conference call with the American Nurses' Credentialing Center of the American Nurses Association that the medical center's nurses have earned the coveted Magnet award for nursing excellence. Baptist Medical Center is the only hospital in Mississippi to hold the Magnet award. (BR special photo courtesy of Baptist Medical Center)

BMC gets top national award

Nursing excellence, patient care honored

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) – Baptist Medical Center (BMC) in Jackson has been awarded the nation's top honor for nursing excellence from the American Nurses' Credentialing Center (ANCC) of the American Nurses Association.

The Magnet Recognition Program® recognizes hospitals that have met a demanding set of criteria designed to measure the quality of patient care and the level of professional nursing practiced at the facility. Only seven percent of hospitals in America have been granted Magnet recognition, and BMC is the only hospital in Mississippi to receive the designation.

BMC is a part of Baptist Health Systems, Inc. (BHS), which is headquartered in Jackson and affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

see BMC on p. 9

Trump withholds funds for UN agency

WASHINGTON (BP) — The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has reactivated another international pro-life policy, this time by withholding funds from a controversial United Nations family planning agency linked to the support of China's population-control program that includes involuntary sterilizations, forced abortions, and infanticide.

The U.S. State Department announced in an April 3 letter it would not forward congressionally-approved money to the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA. The action came 10 weeks after Trump signed an executive order to reinstate the Mexico City Policy, which bans federal funds for organizations that perform or promote abortions overseas.

In both cases, Trump reversed the practices of his predecessor, President Barack Obama, whose administration gave nearly $68 million to UNFPA in the latest financial year, according to the National Right to Life Committee.

see FUNDS on p. 9

Witnessing Through Media Awards

The Witnessing Through Media Awards, sponsored by the Communication Services Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, annually recognize radio and video productions that demonstrate excellence in message design and production in helping to bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus. Award winners are announced at the annual Witnessing Through Media Conference. Winners for best videos in 2017 include (from left) Ken Sims – First Church, Jackson, for Division II Church Musical: *Carols By Candlelight 2016*; Joel Wright and Chris Clatterbuck – Broadmoor Church, Madison, for Division II Feature Presentation: *Christmas Worship Experience*; for Magazine: *Canvas Student Series Article*; for Promotional: *Jackson Street Ministry*; for Award of Excellence: *Canvas Student Series Article*; Bretton Crosby and Todd Germany – First Church, Ridgeland, for Division II Commercial: *LifeGroups@First Ridgeland*; for Worship: *October 9 – Derrick's 10 Year Anniversary*

(Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

A memorial service

According to The Daily Camera newspaper in Boulder, Co., hundreds of citizens of that fair city turned out for a memorial service to mourn the victim of a police shooting and express outrage at the actions of the officers involved.

"He was part of the neighborhood," resident Bobby Brown told the newspaper in describing the victim. "It's sad he won't be coming back." George Pappageorge observed. "I know a lot of us have had a lot of anger, a lot of questions, a lot of uncertainty," said vigil organizer Jim Riemersma, who added, "We loved him. But I think he loved us, too..."

The hymn, Amazing Grace, was sung at the candlelight service, albeit with misquoted lyrics. Mourners brought their children and dogs to see the makeshift memorial and the photograph of the victim posted on a nearby tree. There were tears and hugs all around.

Thus the people of Boulder — home to the flagship campus of the University of Colorado — came together as one to grieve and seek closure in the passing of the Mapleton Hill bull elk.

Yes, there was a memorial service for an animal reported wandering through the Mapleton Hill neighborhood that had to be shot by police. Residents are sure it was the same bull elk that had sauntered through the neighborhood several times over the past two years. There is apparently some dispute over whether the animal was aggressive, as well as accusations that he was selfishly killed for the meat.

Nevertheless, the city is in an uproar over the incident. "People live here because we love the wildlife," Esther Parson told The Daily Camera. "To murder an animal who feels like he's part of the neighborhood is despicable."

"He was a beautiful animal," Nancy Platt observed in the newspaper article. "He was hurting nobody. He didn't deserve what he got."

With America continuing to unleash its anger over the pestilence of unborn human beings through the destruction of tens of millions of babies, the story of the Mapleton Hill bull elk is another illustration of just how insane our society has become and how brutally uncaring we are toward our children. Would that the people of Boulder, as well as people all across this country, cared as much about the life of those millions of human babies as they do about one bull elk.

In America, a person can go to prison for years for throwing a defenseless puppy from a speeding automobile, but the abortionist who crushes the skull of a human baby born alive during a botched abortion is applauded as a hero of the Constitution. In America, it is a federal crime to even touch the egg of a bald eagle, but a human baby can be hooked and dragged, piece by precious piece, from the safety of her mother's womb with impunity.

In America, it is illegal to possess many animal parts such as ivory elephant tusks and antlers of rare beasts, but abortion clinics are allowed to organize disassembly lines to gut still-breathing human babies so their parts can be sold on the open market for ghoulish experiments.

In Mississippi, learned religious leaders and other sophisticates nitpick every word of a Personhood Amendment and celebrate its ultimate failure, while proudly posting photographs on-line of their privileged children and grandchildren who were allowed the chance to live.

There's something wrong in Boulder, and there's something wrong in America. When we work harder to memorialize the life of an animal than we do to save the lives of our children, we are lower and more crazed than even the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And we already know what happened to them...

God's Way at Garaywa

Softer Side
with Cindy Townsend

Garaywa Camp and Conference Center in Clinton celebrates 70 years of ministry in 2017. The motto for Garaywa is, *Loving God. Making Disciples. Experiencing Missions. Changing the World!*

Garaywa is a year-round retreat center and summer camp ministry managed by the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union and Women's Ministry auxiliary to the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Garaywa averages over 9,000 guests attending meetings and conferences throughout the year. The camp is named Garaywa as an acrostic for three missions organizations: GAs, RAs, and YWAs (Girls in Action, Royal Ambassadors, and Young Woman's Auxiliary).

Entering the gates of Garaywa Camp and Conference Center and seeing the quiet swaying of the moss-laden trees is like being transported from a stress-filled existence into the peaceful presence of God's beautiful creation. God has done some of His greatest work in the hearts and lives of those who come to seek Him there. Here are just a few people who have encountered God's Way at Garaywa:

■ **David Eldridge,** pastor of First Church, Clinton. "My wife Danielle and I have a special love for Camp Garaywa. As a graduating high school senior, I was one of the guys who held the title of 'Yard Boy.' In between cutting grass, weed-eating, and cleaning the pool, I noticed a Mississippi College summer counselor in Cabin 4.

"While Danielle cherishes her memories as a counselor instilling God's word and a love for missions in her campers, we both celebrate that God would use that special place to introduce us to one another."

■ **Kristi Roberts,** former cabin leader at Garaywa who now serves in South Asia as a missionary. "My last year at Garaywa's Mission Camp, I answered God's call to missions."

■ **Kay Cassibry,** former Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union executive director. "I have experienced God's intimate presence through various conferences, retreats, and quiet times of reflection at Garaywa.

It is such a blessing to see young girls give their hearts to the Lord and young women grow in their faith, leadership skills, and build strong lifelong Christian friendships."

■ **Marcie Rhodes,** 2016 camper. "I accepted Jesus as my Savior and began my personal relationship with Jesus at Garaywa."

■ **Amanda Mooneyhan** of Pontotoc. "I came to Camp Garaywa as a GA from ages seven to 11. I am now a mother of a 10-year-old daughter, Jorja Kate. We recently attended Garaywa's Mother/Daughter Retreat together. Joy, joy, joy fills my soul!"

■ **Jordan Ball,** 2016 WMU/Women's Ministries intern: "Last summer, I filled baskets with 500 pounds of black beans to give a visual illustration to summer campers of the lostness of the world. Each black bean represented 200 unsaved people in the world. As I held the beans, God broke my heart for how desperately people need Jesus and how much I need to be on mission to tell others of His love."

Truly, God's Way at Garaywa for 70 years is worth celebrating! All friends of Garaywa can join the 70th anniversary celebration, titled "Find Us Faithful," on the Clinton campus at 312 Camp Garaywa Road on May 6 from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., including a free reunion lunch and program. No registration is required.

For more information on Find Us Faithful, contact Alicia Dungan at (601) 924-7034. E-mail: adungan@garaywa.org

To God be the glory, great things He has done. May God continue to have His way at Garaywa!

Townsend is executive director of the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union and Women's Ministry auxiliary to the Mississippi Baptist Convention in Jackson. Edited for clarity and style.

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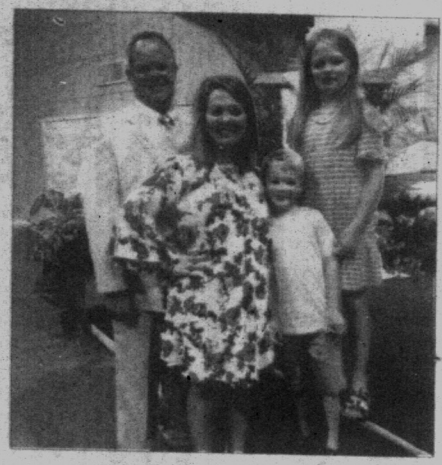
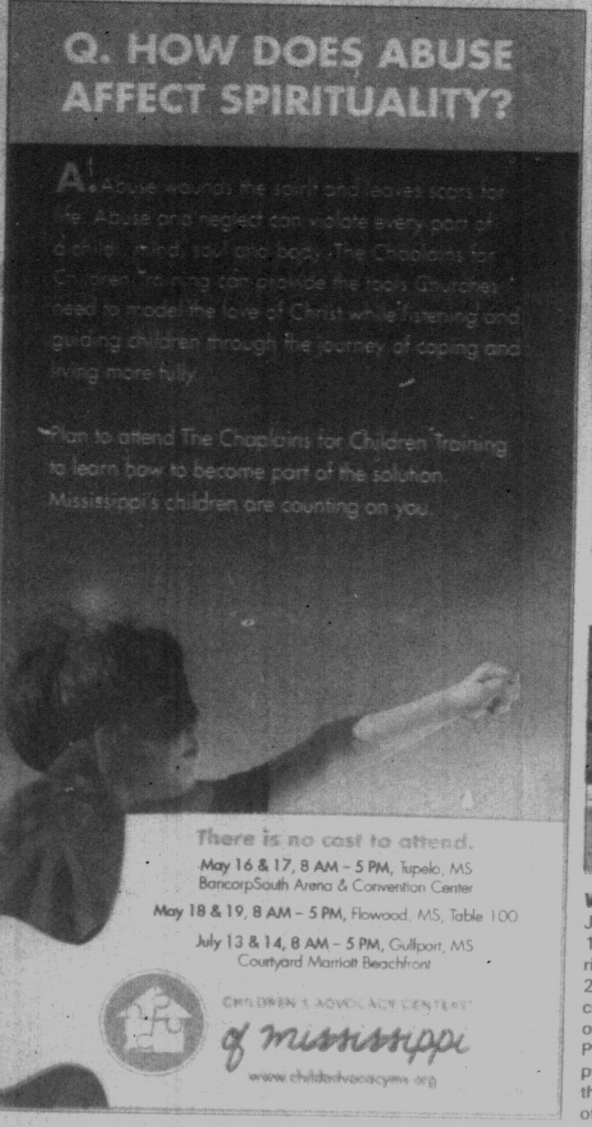
Staff Changes

Pastor Billy Sellers of **GRACE CHURCH, RICHLAND,** has retired after 13 years of service. Shown is new pastor Ron Graves and his wife, Mae.

SPRINGFIELD CHURCH, MORTON, has called Brian Sanderson as student minister. He is shown with his wife, Paige, and their three daughters, Emma, Kynslee, and Molly-Kate.



GRACE UNITED CHURCH, DECATUR, has called Jamie Leach as pastor. He is shown with his wife, Kristy, daughter, Jacie, and son, Karson.

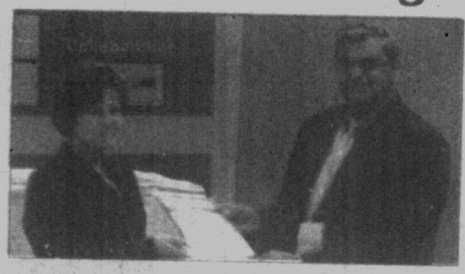


Bible Drills

The 3rd – 6th grade Bible drill team of **CUMBERLAND CHURCH, CUMBERLAND,** presented what they learned in the evening worship service of the church in preparation for the associational drill. Chris Barrow, pastor.

CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO, had three participants who achieved Excellent in the Lincoln Association and State drills. Shown, back row, are Mitch Reeves and Brandon Welch; front row, Jax Leggett. Hal Hatten, pastor.

College News



WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY faculty member Judy Prehn received the "Best Poster Award" at the 10th Annual World Conference on Pediatrics, Pediatric Gastroenterology, and Nutrition held March 23-25, 2017, in Orlando, Florida. The poster subject was "decreasing sound and vibration during ground transport of infants with very low birth weight." Prehn lives in Purvis and is an associate professor of physical therapy and clinical education director at WCU. Presenting the award is Joseph Mathew, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, India.

In other College News:

➤ Gov. Phil Bryant will address **Mississippi College's** Class of 2017 at Spring commencement on the Clinton campus. Serving his second term as Mississippi's chief executive, Bryant will also receive an honorary doctorate during ceremonies May 5 for the MC Graduate School. A former Mississippi College political science instructor, Bryant speaks at the program beginning 7 p.m. that Friday evening at the A.E. Wood Coliseum. Up to 264 graduate students seek diplomas.

➤ YourLocalSecurity ranked **William Carey University** as the safest campus in Mississippi in its "Safest College Campus by State" report released April 4. Using data and statistics from the FBI and U.S. Department of Education, YourLocalSecurity isolated the safest college campus in each state, based on low crime rates and programs designed to provide on-campus protection. These rankings take crimes reported by universities and place them into three main categories: violent crime, property crime, and violence against women.

Air Force disciplines Christian flight surgeon

SAN ANTONIO (BP) — First Liberty Institute in Plano, Texas, is seeking justice for U.S. Air Force Col. Michael Madrid, a flight surgeon the institute believes was wrongly reprimanded in 2016 for his Christian religious beliefs about marriage and sexuality.

MADRID

The U.S. Air Force originally cleared Madrid in 2014 of charges that he made unsubstantiated derogatory comments against homosexuality to an openly homosexual airman prior to the airman's court martial for unrelated criminal offenses. However, when Madrid was placed under the command of Maj. Gen. John E. McCoy two years after the case was closed, McCoy accused Madrid of having lied during the investigation and disciplined him without any new evidence, contends First Liberty, a religious freedom law firm.

First Liberty is demanding that the Air Force rescind McCoy's official letter of admonishment from Madrid's permanent record or face further legal action. The letter of admonishment denies Madrid's due process, First Liberty alleges, and discriminates against the devout Christian because he believes marriage is a sacred union between one man and one woman.

"Colonel Madrid submitted to an extensive military investigation and the Air Force cleared him. Major General McCoy has no right to ignore the rule of law and arbitrarily decide, more than two years later and without any new evidence, that he can punish Col. Madrid," said Mike Berry, First Liberty senior counsel and director of military affairs, in a March 29 news release.

Weeks before McCoy issued the letter, Madrid had been promoted from lieutenant colonel to colonel, but the letter virtually ensures that Madrid will not be promoted to the next rank of brigadier general, Berry said. Rather, the discipline could lead to Madrid's demotion, causing him to lose tens of thousands of dollars in active duty and retired pay, the attorney said.

The Air Force has acknowledged receipt of First Liberty's request but has not responded. About 2,500 people have signed a letter at LibertyInstitute.com in support of Madrid, Berry told Baptist Press (BP) on April 3.

"First Liberty's next step depends entirely [on] how the Air Force responds," Berry said. "We are keeping all available options on the table."

The exact derogatory comments Madrid was accused of making have not been revealed, as the Air Force has redacted the information from the case file, First Liberty chief communications officer Kassie Dulin told BP.

"We don't know all of the details because the Air Force redacted the investigator's legal analysis and the conclusion that ultimately cleared Col. Madrid," Dulin said March 29. "The false accusations are not something we want to repeat. Col. Madrid categorically denies making those statements and finds the statements offensive."

Madrid, a member of the Christian nondenominational Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, has served in the Air Force for 26 years. He is a four-time recipient of the Meritorious Service Medal that recognizes "singularly distinctive accomplishments."

"I feel like the full power of the Air Force is coming down on me because of my faith," Madrid said in the First Liberty press release. "Now, after more than a quarter-century of service to this nation, I feel like I constantly have to look over my shoulder. It's incredibly intimidating."

Berry said cases such as Madrid's are becoming more common in military life.

"At First Liberty Institute, we've seen multiple cases in which military officials have refused to tolerate service members' traditional religious beliefs," Berry said. "Colonel Madrid doesn't hide the fact that he is a devout Christian. We are concerned that Major General McCoy judged and punished Madrid — a decorated Air Force officer — because he became aware of Colonel Madrid's traditional religious views. If so, that not only harms the military, but it is illegal."

The airman who made the accusations against Madrid, whom First Liberty did not name, was court-martialed after being found guilty of multiple criminal offenses, First Liberty said, including illegally bringing a loaded weapon onto the Air Force base, prescribing narcotics illegally and performing duties while under the influence of narcotics.

Center for Baptist Renewal focuses on historic church

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP and local reports) — Two professors, one from Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) in Shawnee and the other from California Baptist University (CBU) in Riverside, are at the forefront of the new Center for Baptist Renewal (CBR) that aims to equip pastors and leaders to incorporate perspectives and practices of the historic church within their local congregations.

EMERSON

STAMPS

Serving as executive directors of the online CBR are Matthew Y. Emerson, OBU assistant professor of religion and holder of the Dickinson Chair of Religion, and R. Lucas Stamps, CBU assistant professor of Christian studies.

Brandon D. Smith, who is part of the Christian Standard Bible translation team at LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville, is the center's editorial director. Winston Hottman, director of institutional effectiveness at Criswell College in Dallas, is the operations director.

The center launched March 13 at centerforbaptistrenewal.com, and sets forth the concept of "Baptist catholicity" to help Baptists understand their place in Christian history.

"We are not just Baptists playing Anglican or Roman Catholic. That's not what we mean by Baptist catholicity," Stamps said. "Instead, what we are trying to do is to help Baptists better situate ourselves within the broader body of Christ and the historic Christian tradition."

The center began to take shape at the 2014 Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) annual meeting when Emerson and Stamps presented a paper on the topic of Baptist catholicity.

Emerson recounted how the paper sparked the idea for CBR: "Brandon and Winston encountered Baptist catholicity at Criswell, and when Brandon heard of our paper he asked if we'd be interested in starting a center. He and Winston drafted a proposal, and we then sent it out to potential fellows."

The CBR's fellows are a group of pastors and scholars who embody and support the center's vision, mission, and values. Among the center's inaugural fellows are Baptist leaders such as:

■ Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Al.

■ David S. Dockery, president of Trinity International University in Deerfield, Il.

■ Michael A.G. Haykin, professor of church history and biblical spirituality, and director of the Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

■ Nathan Finn, dean of the School of Theology and Missions, and professor of Christian thought and tradition, at Union University in Jackson, Tn.

"We need to be convictional Baptists who are shaped first and foremost by Scripture," Finn said, "but we also need to learn from the wisdom of the ancient church, the medieval church, the Reformation, evangelicalism, and of course our own Baptist tradition."

The center's leaders aim to foster unity despite denominational differences, with Stamps noting, "At times, we will need to critique other Christian traditions but at other times — and in many ways this is the more treacherous and neglected path — we need to state our appreciation for the insights of other traditions and more importantly for the great tradition of Trinitarian orthodoxy that we all share in common."

The center intends to hold its first event at the ETS annual meeting in November in Providence, R.I.

MS POSITIONS

FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH ECRU, MS IS CURRENTLY ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR SENIOR PASTOR. Resumes may be sent to Barry McGregor c/o Friendship Baptist Church 85 Friendship Rd Ecru, MS 38841.

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SANDERSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH IN SANDERSVILLE, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to pat.dement@gmail.com or 32 Davenport Rd., Laurel, MS 39443.

SOUTHWAY BAPTIST CHURCH IN BROOKHAVEN, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR MINISTER OF YOUTH. Please email resumes to southwaybaptist@yahoo.com

ROCKY POINT BAPTIST CHURCH, CARTHAGE, MS, IN LEAKE COUNTY IS CURRENTLY ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR FULL-TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to Dian Grundy, 3136 Rocky Point Rd, Carthage, Ms., 39051

RAYMOND ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH IN JACKSON IS CURRENTLY ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A PASTOR. Resumes can be sent to RRBC, 4822 Raymond Road, Jackson MS 39212, ATTN: Pastor Search committee or e-mail resumes to rrbcpastorsearch17@gmail.com.

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FUNDS

cont. from p. 1

Though China revised its "One-Child" policy to a "Two-Child" policy in January 2016, the central and provincial governments in the world's most populous country continue to penalize those who exceed the limit, the U.S. State Department said in a two-page memorandum.

Citing its 2016 human rights report, the department said in the memorandum the communist giant's policy still relies on "mandatory pregnancy examinations and coercive abortions and sterilizations."

The UNFPA refuted the charge that it was involved in China policy, saying in a written statement that all of its work "promotes the human rights of individuals and couples to make their own decisions, free of coercion or discrimination."

As a result of the Trump administration action, the money budgeted by Congress for the UNFPA this year — $32.5 million, according to news reports — will be available for "other family planning, maternal, and reproductive health activities," according to the U.S. State Department memorandum.

BMC

cont. from p. 1

"This honor is the ultimate affirmation of quality and excellence in the care of patients from nursing and from everyone in the organization. Words cannot express the gratitude we have towards all our staff taking us on this journey to improve patient outcomes at the same time increasing job satisfaction," said Bobbie Ware, BHS chief nursing officer and BMC chief operating officer.

"[R]eaching Magnet Status validates the organization's work to provide the best care from a team effort and through evidenced-based practices."

ANCC defines a Magnet hospital as one where nursing care results in excellent patient outcomes and where nurses maintain high levels of job satisfaction. Magnet status includes various departments throughout the medical center being involved in the evaluation of outcomes and decision-making in patient care delivery.

The Magnet Program recognizes that the organization provides resources for nurses to continue lifelong learning and shows a low staff nurse turnover rate. The program is based on five core principles:

- Transformational leadership.
- Structural empowerment.
- Exemplary professional practice.
- New knowledge, innovations, and improvements.
- Empirical outcomes.

BMC's nursing excellence and research coordinator, Tina Magers, led the effort to bring the medical center's level of nursing care to the attention of ANCC.

"Our Journey to Excellence involves everything from ensuring best practices are used daily to providing the highest quality patient care and a healthy work environment where everyone's role is valued. It also requires providing a safe environment and fostering a strong, collaborative work effort with physicians and others on the healthcare team."

BMC was recognized in 2017 by Healthgrades as one of America's 100 Best Hospitals™ for orthopedic surgery, joint replacement, and prostate surgery. The hospital was selected as one of America's 50 Best Hospitals for vascular surgery.

In addition, for two years in a row BMC received the Healthgrades Outstanding Patient Experience Award and holds more Joint Commission Disease Specific Certifications than any other hospital in Mississippi.

Since its founding in 1911 as Jackson's first hospital, BMC has been guided by its Christian faith. The medical center treats patients from all 82 Mississippi counties and all 50 states. Its medical staff includes approximately 600 board-certified physicians representing more than 50 medical specialties and about 900 nurses.

BMC employs over 3,700 healthcare professionals, manages 21,500 admissions and 194,000 clinic visits annually, and will see over 100,000 emergency department patients in 2017.

For more information, visit mbhs.org.

TOP NATIONAL AWARD — The board of directors for Baptist Medical Center (BMC) in Jackson presented the hospital's nursing leaders with plaques to commemorate the prestigious Magnet Recognition Program® award the hospital received from the accrediting arm of the American Nurses Association. On hand were (from left) Karlen Turbeville, BMC board of directors chair; Bobbie Ware, Baptist Health Systems, Inc., (BHS) chief nursing officer and BMC chief operating officer; Brenda Howie, BHS vice-president of nursing; Skip Jernigan, BHS board of trustees chair; and Tina Magers, BHS nursing excellence and research coordinator. Baptist Medical Center is a division of Baptist Health Systems, Inc. (Photo courtesy of BMC)

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Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

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Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

The Village View

THE BAPTIST CHILDREN'S VILLAGE

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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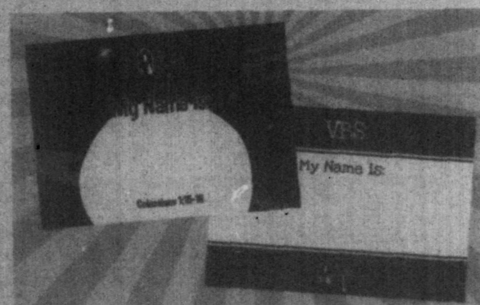

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How Do We Remember? • *Matthew 26:17-30*

Explore the Bible
with Cyndi Grace

We lived nearly 20 years in South Florida where there is a large Jewish population including a great number of believing Messianic Jews. They well know how the New Testament has fulfilled the Old Testament in many areas but for our purposes specifically, the Lord's Supper. The Passover Meal was the Jewish meal of remembering the wonderful works of God and remembering His future promises. Jesus and His disciples were observing this Passover Meal. Our understanding it better, in its order and purpose, should enhance the observance of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

Cleansing

The first part of the observance of Passover included cleansing. Old Testament priests, before entering the Holy Place, had an intense eight-day time of consecration but needed to wash their hands and their feet before entering to remove any dirt they picked up on the way. Before the Passover meal, the disciples would have washed their hands but John's Gospel tells that Jesus washed the disciples' feet, as well. This was significant. Peter's refusal and subsequent "wash me all over!" caused Jesus to state he was already clean except from the daily grim. (hands and feet) If we are to truly serve Him, confession (washing) is important. How do you come to His table?

The Meal

Understanding more about the Passover meal has helped me to pray while the elements are given in the Lord's Supper. There were four cups and each had a purpose.

• **1st cup** — To remember God's deliverance from Egypt. Egypt was a place of bondage and slavery. We can remember our "Egypt" and the areas of slavery in our lives. (Perfectionism, legalism, selfishness, bitterness, un-forgiveness, pride, disobedience?) Spend time thanking God for His deliverance.

• **2nd cup** — God's promise of the Promised Land. Perhaps you are wondering when God is going to deliver you to your promised land. His promise is as true today as it was then. He will never leave you or forsake you. Hold to His assurance without longing to go back to your Egypt. That attitude will keep you from wandering in the wilderness. We can use this time to renew our faith that God's promise to deliver you is true.

• **Bread is served.** In the Holy Place, there was the "shewbread" on the table to remind the people that God was with them. (Exodus 25:30) It was a reminder of God's PRESENCE, PROVISION, and PROMISE. When Jesus held up the bread and said this was His body the disciples knew what He meant. When we partake of the bread, perhaps we need to focus upon His Presence which is always there, that He will Provide for our every need and His Promise to return for us as He said in John 14. Jesus said, Take, eat, this is my body given to you! In saying this, He is telling us He is our all in all.

• **The 3rd cup** — Cup of God's Redemption. It was this cup that Jesus used to symbolize His blood. The disciples knew what this cup meant. For the Jews, life was in the blood and they understood the sacrifice and shedding of blood. They knew that for blood to be shed, there had to be death so this was a very serious statement Jesus made. They also understood that he was saying He was their Redeemer. Jesus' shedding His blood opened the door for our relationship with God to be restored. This is more than a ritual it is mankind's second chance.

• **4th cup** — That God will take them as His people. Jesus stated that He would not drink of this cup until later — meaning at His glorious return at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19.) All believers will drink of this cup with Jesus on that day.

I Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul's depiction of the Lord's Supper quotes Jesus as saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." We are a forgetful people and need to be reminded time and again the wonderful things God has done for us. We have too often observed our ordinances of Baptism and especially the Lord's Supper without truly understanding and perhaps they have become ritualistic and boring. This lesson was a bit different but my prayer is that, as we truly understand the seriousness of the fulfillment God set forth in the Old Testament we will long to sit at His table and remember.

Grace is a Bible teacher, conference leader, and member of First Church, Clinton.

Life in the Church • *I Peter 4:7-11*

Bible Studies for Life
with Jim Burnett

In 1974 Johnny Cash came out with one of the greatest patriotic songs of all time: Ragged Old Flag. The song chronicled the history of America, the wars and crises we have been through, and the resilience of the American flag that still flies proudly across our nation.

The Church of Christ has been through a lot since being birthed at Pentecost over 2,000 years ago, but she is as strong today as she ever was because she is an eternal entity. In fact, Jesus himself guaranteed that the gates of hell would not be strong enough to stop the church and the truth she espouses (Matt. 16:18).

In the passages before us this week the Apostle Peter reminds us that our identity in Christ dictates and defines our relationship with church family members. We need to be connected to other believers. God knew this and that's one reason he created the church. We can't grow or be healthy in isolation.

But the Church has never been perfect because it is made of imperfect people. And unfortunately sometimes things happen in congregations that cause believers to get hurt, become angry, and leave. Sadly those who do leave and never plug back into a local body of Christ become easy prey when they cordon their lives off from other Christians. There is danger in going it alone because "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8 NIV).

In 1 Peter 4:7 the Peter gives us a strategy for keeping our churches strong and healthy. First we are to pray for others and with others. There is no greater spiritual weapon that God has given his church than prayer. Intercessory prayer is a powerful way to demonstrate your love for fellow believers. This kind of praying is other-centered. Many times as a pastor, I have felt the prayers of the congregation I serve. Frankly, it provided the fuel I needed to keep going. When we truly love each other we will pray for one another. And God hears those prayers. Use your direct connection to God to pray for and with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

In I Peter 4:8-9 Peter gives us the second step in our strategy to strengthen our churches and make them healthy: love one another. I like to work with wood and build things. But I am by no means a carpenter, not even close. That's why I always purchase plenty of caulk for most of my projects. Caulk covers a multitude of my mistakes. That's exactly what Peter said love would do for offenses. It covers over them.

The kind of love Peter is prescribing does not always come easy. It requires that we work at our relationships with one another, that we give each other the benefit of the doubt. When we offend we ask forgiveness. When we are offended we offer forgiveness. That's just what Christians do. There should be absolutely nothing we can't work out because of our relationship with Jesus. The blood of Christ is powerful when applied. What he did on that cross for us should trump any and all sins committed against us. A part of loving each other is being hospitable or friendly. Smile at your brothers and sisters in Christ. Shake their hands. Love on them, for this fosters unity and strong bonds, but do it genuinely.

A third thing we can do to make our churches strong and healthy is serve one another. In 1 Peter 4: 10-11 Peter reminds us that God has given every single believer at least one gift and then he tells us why: to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. But this God-given must be used in the strength of the Lord and for his glory.

Are you serving the Lord by using the gift or gifts he has given you? There is much joy in being used by God. Unfortunately many church members have never experienced the fulfillment that comes from serving the Lord. Would you help them get plugged in? Would you invite them to be a part of your ministry? Sometimes all it takes is for them to see a need and be given an opportunity.

Pray for your church and love and serve in the strength of the Lord, for this will enhance church life.

Burnett is pastor of Willow Pointe Church, Hattiesburg.

Hostilities toward faiths on increase, again

WASHINGTON (BP) – After two years of declines, religious adherents around the world have lately been experiencing greater government restraints and social animosities, according to a study from the Pew Research Center released April 11.

The percentage of countries with "high" or "very high" levels of anti-religious policies or acts increased slightly in 2015. The share of countries with such levels of government restrictions – including laws, policies and actions – edged up from 24 %in 2014 to 25% in 2015.

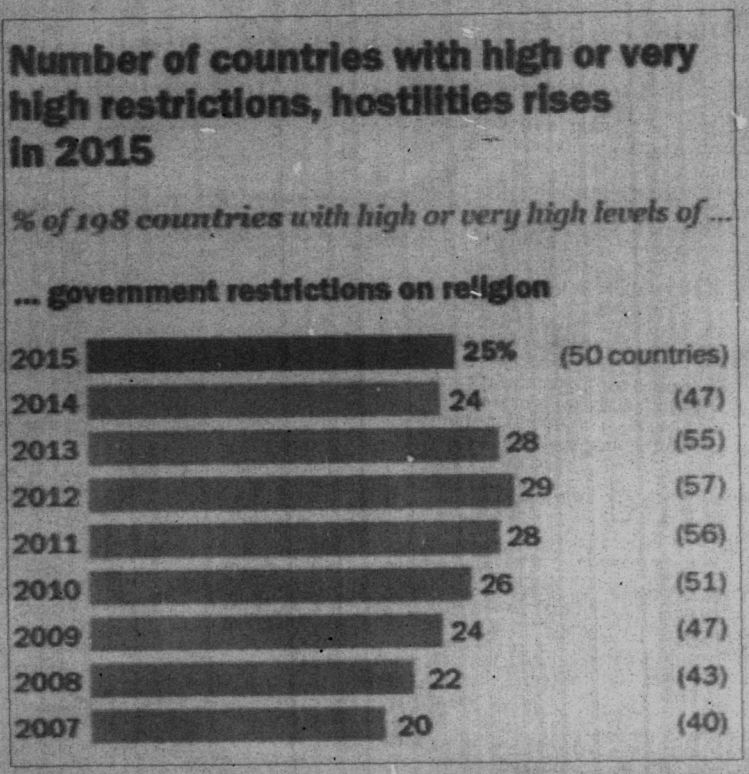
The percentage of countries with such degrees of religious hostility that are committed by individuals, organizations, or societal groups jumped from 23% to 27%.

Among Pew's other findings for 2015 in its study of 198 countries:

- 40% of the world's countries have "high" or "very high" levels overall of restrictions/hostilities, a rise of six percent from 2014.
- 79% of the world's population lives in these countries, a hike of five percent.
- 53% of countries reported "widespread government harassment of religious groups," an increase of 10%.
- 12% of countries documented more than 200 cases of the use of government force against religious groups, a growth of one percent.

Among factors in the global increase in social animosities were rises in religiously-related mob violence, assaults against and displacement of people of faith, and attacks to impose religious rules.

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, said in response to the Pew report, "For millions, including many of our Christian brothers and sisters around the world, conscience freedom is constantly in peril. This new data confirms how urgent the need is for advocacy on behalf of so many who face danger for their convictions.



"I pray that the United States would continue its important work for global religious freedom and, more importantly, that the church of Jesus Christ would tirelessly work and pray for our fellow believers who are being persecuted by Caesar," Moore wrote in comments to Baptist Press.

Government harassment and use of force against religious groups surged in 2015, Pew reported. Four of the five geographic regions examined in the report – the Middle East-North Africa, Asia-Pacific, sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe – had increases in these categories.

Europe experienced the greatest growth in government harassment or use of force against religious groups, with 53% of its countries showing such increases in 2015, according to the study.

Sub-Saharan Africa was next, with 48 % of its countries experiencing growth in such actions. The Middle East-North Africa, however, continues to lead all regions, with 95% of its countries marked by government harassment and/or use of force against religious bodies.

In Europe, Jews and Muslims experienced social hostilities in more countries than did Christians, according to Pew. Such animosities against Jews were found in 33 of Europe's 45 countries and against Muslims in 32 European countries.

Christians experienced such hostilities in 21 countries.

Harassment and the use of force by European governments against Muslims came in a year when 1.3 million immigrants – more than half from the Muslim-majority countries of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria – sought asylum on the continent, Pew noted.

It also was a year marked by threats and deadly attacks by Islamic terrorists in European countries.

Worldwide, Christians and Muslims continue to be harassed in the largest number of countries, according to the study. The number of countries in which Christians were harassed jumped from 108 to 128 in 2015. For Muslims, the number surged from 100 to 125.

Twenty-three countries had "very high" levels of government limitations in 2015, an increase of seven from 2014. At the top of the list were Egypt, China, Iran, Russia, Uzbekistan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Syria, and Morocco.

Last year, the U.S. State Department designated 10 "countries of particular concern," a category reserved for especially severe violators of religious liberty. Those countries were Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

According to its web site, Pew Research Center is a "nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes, and trends shaping America and the world." The center is located in Washington, D.C.

For its study, Pew relied on nearly a dozen sources including annual reports from the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

Five states declare pornography a public health crisis

NASHVILLE (BP) – At least five states have officially declared pornography a public health crisis or harmful to the public and at least one other is considering a similar measure, according to bill updates filed on state legislature websites.

A resolution passed by the Tennessee Legislature declaring pornography a public health hazard is awaiting Gov. Bill Haslam's signature. Days earlier, Tennessee became the fourth state to adopt such a resolution, joining Utah, South Dakota, and Arkansas.

The Virginia General Assembly stopped short of declaring pornography a public health hazard or crisis, but in February passed a resolution that pornography leads to "individual and societal harms."

The Georgia legislature adjourned its 2017 session with two resolutions, both stuck in committees, that would have declared pornography a public health crisis.

The resolutions emphasize research showing the harmful effects of pornography and call for education, prevention, and policy changes at the community and societal levels. As resolutions, none of the measures add to criminal offenses regarding pornography nor stipulate any punishment for its use.

Jay Dennis, founder of the One Million Men anti-pornography ministry, told Baptist Press the measures are a valuable victory in communicating porn's harm.

"The fact that states are beginning to recognize pornography as a public health hazard underscores what the Bible has been clear upon – sexual sin is destructive not only spiritually, but also emotionally and physically," said Dennis, who will be retiring in May as pastor of First Church at the Mall in Lakeland, Fl.

"Identifying pornography as a public health hazard presents factual information to those outside of Christianity that this is not just a spiritual battle, it is a health issue facing every person," he pointed out.

Dennis encourages pastors to educate their churches on the dangers of porn, which he believes feeds sexual sin including human trafficking.

"This presents an opportunity for the church to begin broaching the subject of pornography, the number-one moral issue every church is facing," Dennis said in January after the Tennessee measure was introduced.

"It's time to speak up and be the moral authority and allow the states to verify that fact. We must pray that every state will have the courage to enact legislation to show pornography's destructive harm," he said.

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE), which drafted the bill that Utah passed in 2016 as the first among the states, hailed that bill's "domino effect" and the provoking of "an international debate" on the issue.

"Even the Canadian Parliament passed a motion to study the public health impacts of pornography," NCOSE senior vice-president and executive director Dawn Hawkins said after Tennessee's passage.

"The Israeli Knesset is considering formal statements, and New Zealand activists are petitioning their government to address the harms of pornography," she added.

When state Sen. Mae Beavers, a Republican, introduced Tennessee's measure in January, she observed that what was previously considered hardcore pornography has now become mainstream. With technology, the average age of exposure to pornography is 11-12 years of age, she said, citing Washington State studies showing that as recently as 2004, 24.7% of convicted murderers in that state said pornography served as a trigger for their crimes.

Pornography is potentially biologically addictive, Tennessee's resolution states. The resolution adds that pornography is detrimental to families, discourages young men from marriage, and leads to marital dissatisfaction and infidelity. The measure also includes that porngraphy:

- Treats women as "objects and commodities for the viewer's use."
- "Normalizes violence and abuse of women and children."
- "Increases the demand for sex trafficking, prostitution, and... child pornography."
- May cause emotional, mental and medical illnesses.

South Dakota passed a concurrent resolution declaring porn a public health hazard Jan. 31, followed by the Arkansas House of Representatives on March 28. The Arkansas measure does not require Senate approval.